

WHEN THE STAGECOACH RAN FROM COLTON TO VERNAL

AN OLD-TIME DRIVER HAS SOME TALES TO TELL

STAGECOACHES AS A MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION SEEMS TO BE SOME THING WAY OFF IN THE EARLIEST DAYS OF THE WEST, BUT ACTUALLY THEY ARE NOT SO FAR OFF.

IN FACT LESTER GARDNER OF NEOLA, DUCHESNE COUNTY, REMEMBERS THEM WELL MAINLY BECAUSE AT THE AGE OF 18 HE DROVE FOR THE OLD DUCHESNE STAGE AND TRANSPORTATION CO. WHICH FIRST RAN FROM COLTON TO VERNAL AND LATER CHANGED FROM HELPER TO VERNAL.

BUT THE COWBOYS AND INDIANS IMAGE OF STAGECOACHES WAS NOT FAR FROM THE GARDNER FAMILY. LES' DAD, ED GARDNER, WHO WAS ONE OF THE FOUNDERS OF THE STAGECOACH COMPANY, WAS IN A PARTY OF WHITE SETTLERS WHO TRAILED AND SHOT A GROUP OF INDIANS WHO HAD MASSACRED ALL BUT ONE OF THE GIBBONS FAMILY. THE ELDER GARDNER LATER BOUGHT THE GIBBONS RANCH AT INDIANOLA, FIRST TO BE ESTABLISHED IN THE AREA. IT WAS HERE THAT LESTER WAS BORN.

*Givens* THE YOUNG MR. GARDNER WHO HAS BEEN 'LES' TO HIS FRIENDS SINCE HIS YOUTH, HAS MANY INTERESTING TALES TO TELL ABOUT THOSE DAYS OF HORSES AND COACHES.

HE WAS NEVER HELD UP BY "ROAD AGENTS", BUT BELIEVES HE HAD A NARROW ESCAPE ONE DAY. HE WAS DRIVING THE COACH UP INDIAN CANYON AND BECAME AWARE OF A COUPLE OF SUSPICIOUS LOOKING CHARACTERS FOLLOWING HIM ON HORSEBACK—JUST KEEPING THEIR DISTANCE. HE WAS EXPECTING TROUBLE AS HE PULLED UP TO THE TOP OF THE CANYON ROAD, BUT JUST THEN A WAGON PULLED UP BEHIND HIM AND ANOTHER APPEARED HEADING IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION. THE TWO RIDERS LEFT THE AREA, "PROBABLY SCARED OFF BY THE PRESENCE OF THE TWO OTHER DRIVERS." THE VETERAN STAGECOACH MAN RECALLED.

THE WINTER MONTHS GAVE THE DRIVERS THE MOST TROUBLE, WITH BOBSLEDS BEING SUBSTITUTED FOR COACHES DUE TO DEEP SNOW. ON ONE OF THESE SLED TRIPS LES HAD AS ONE HIS PASSENGERS A "GOOD LOOKING GIRL FROM THE UTAH BASIN." THE ROAD WAS REAL TOUGH AND ONE OF THE SLED RUNNERS SLIPPED OFF THE ROAD, UPENDING THE SLEIGH IN A DEEP WASH. THE GIRL FELL OUT HEAD FIRST INTO A DEEP SNOW BANK, WITH DRESS AND PETTICOATS DOWN AROUND HER NECK, AS SHE STRUGGLED AND KICKED TO GET FREE.

LES WHO AT THAT AGE WAS QUITE BASHFUL, NEARLY LET HER STRANGLE IN THE SNOW BEFORE HE FINALLY GOT THE COURAGE TO WRAP HIS ARMS AROUND THIS UPSIDEDOWN BUNDLE OF FEMININITY AND PULL HER FREE.

ON ANOTHER WINTER OCCASION LES WAS DRIVING TO COLTON WHEN A RAGING BLIZZARD STRUCK, BLOTTING OUT VISION AND DRIVING SNOWS SO DEEP ON THE ROAD THEY COULD NOT GO ON.